

Department of Public Health
and Human Services

Section:
APPLICATION PROCESSING

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Subject:
Application Approval or Denial

Supersedes: FS 104-1 (10/01/05)

References: 7 CFR 273.10, 7 CFR 273.2 (g)(3), 7 CFR 273.2(a)(2), 7 CFR 273.2(c)(6), 7 CFR 273.12(a), Sections 11(u) and 105(a)(3) of the Food Stamp Act

► GENERAL RULE -- All non-expedited applications must be approved or denied within 30 days following the date of application. Processing delays are the only exceptions to this rule.

**ACTIONS WHEN
APPLICATION IS
APPROVED**

When an application is approved, the Office of Public Assistance (OPA) Case Manager must:

1. Authorize the benefit amount(s);
2. Send the appropriate TEAMS approval notice;
3. Send the appropriate TEAMS reporting requirement notice;
4. Send the TEAMS notice X010, 'School Breakfast/Lunch Program' to all households with school-aged children; and,

NOTE: The household or OPA Case Manager is not required to inform the school when the children no longer receive food stamps.

5. Document in TEAMS case notes in sufficient detail to determine the reasonableness and accuracy of the eligibility determination.

**ALLOTMENT
PRORATED FOR
MONTH OF
APPLICATION**

The food stamp benefit amount for the initial month of application is prorated from the application date to the end of the month. TEAMS correctly calculates the benefit amount for a household applying on the 31st as though it applies on the 30th.

**MINIMUM
ALLOTMENTS**

If the prorated benefit amount for the initial month's allotment is less than \$10, the allotment is not issued for the initial month. The OPA Case Manager sends the household the F125 notice, 'APPR FS BENEFIT PRORATED < \$10'.

All eligible one and two person households receive a minimum monthly allotment of \$10 except for the initial month when the allotment is not issued. Households with three or more members eligible for a benefit amount receive minimum allotments of \$2, \$4, and \$6 respectively.

Households (including categorically eligible households) with three or more members passing the gross monthly income (GMI) and net monthly income (NMI) tests but are not eligible for a benefit amount are denied or closed.

COMBINED ALLOTMENTS

A household receives on the same day a prorated allotment for the application month as well as the full allotment for the following month when the following criteria are met:

1. Applies on or after the 16th of the month;
2. Completes the application process;
3. Is determined eligible to receive benefits for the initial month of application and the next month under normal or expedited processing guidelines; **and,**
4. The initial and next month's benefits are **authorized on the same day.**

NOTE: If for any reason benefits are authorized on two separate days, the second month's allotment is not issued until the normal issuance cycle for the month.

Example: An application is received May 16th. The household is interviewed and submits all verifications on May 23rd. May and June benefits are authorized on May 23rd. The household receives both allotments the same day.

CHANGES REPORTED AFTER THE INTERVIEW

A household is required to report all changes related to its eligibility and benefit amount at the application and recertification interview. A household is required to report changes according to the household's reporting requirements after receiving the notice of eligibility (approval notice).

- If a change is reported **after the interview but before the notice of eligibility (approval or denial notice)** is mailed, the OPA Case Manager must act on the change within 10 days of the change being reported regardless of the household's reporting requirements. The OPA Case Manager must send the household a TEAMS notice allowing the household 10 days to verify the change. This change must be included in the application eligibility determination. Benefits must not be delayed (held or pended) beyond the 30th day following the date of application waiting for verification.

EXCEPTION: Resources available at the time the household is interviewed are used to make the resource determination. Changes in resources that occur or are reported after the interview but prior to the notice of eligibility (approval or denial notice) being mailed to the household are disregarded for the month of application. The changes must be considered in determining resource eligibility for the second month's benefit unless the second month's benefit was already issued or time lines do not allow for an adverse action notice to be sent to the household (FS 400).

If there are 10 days before the 30th day of the application processing time frame to verify a change, eligibility is not determined until the verification is received. The OPA Case Manager must send the household a TEAMS notice allowing at least 10 days to provide verification of the change. The change is included in the initial application eligibility determination.

If there are not 10 days before the 30th day of the application processing time frame to verify a change, the application eligibility determination is based on information requested at the interview. The OPA Case Manager must send the household a TEAMS notice allowing 10 days to provide verification of the change. If the verification is received before eligibility is determined and the notice of eligibility (approval notice) is mailed to the household, the change is included in the application eligibility determination. If the verification is received after eligibility is determined and the notice of eligibility (approval notice) is sent to the household, the change is included in the eligibility determination for the month after receipt of the verification following notice of adverse action procedures.

Example 1: A household consists of Ed and three children. The application date is August 5th. Ed is interviewed on August 15th.

On August 22nd Ed submits all necessary information requested at the interview to determine eligibility, and also reports he will receive a raise effective September 1st. The OPA Case Manager requests verification of the raise on August 23rd.

Since there are 10 days before the 30th day of the application processing time frame to verify the change, the application eligibility is not determined until the verification is received. The change is included in the initial application determination of eligibility.

Example 2: A household consists of Ed and three children. The application date is August 10th. Ed is interviewed on August 15th.

On August 25th Ed submits all necessary information requested at the interview to determine eligibility. On September 2nd after the interview but before the notice of eligibility (approval notice) is sent, Ed reports he will receive a raise effective September 1st. On September 2nd the OPA Case Manager requests verification of the raise.

Benefits cannot be held waiting for verification beyond the 30th day of the application date. If the verification is received before eligibility is determined and the notice of eligibility (approval notice) is sent to the household, the change is included in the initial application approval. If the verification is received after eligibility is determined and the notice of eligibility (approval notice) is mailed to the household, the change is included in the eligibility determination for October providing the household with timely notice of adverse action.

DENIAL OF APPLICATION

When it is known the household is ineligible for benefits for the month of application AND the household does not anticipate a change, the application is denied without waiting until the 30th day. However, if the household anticipates a change that allows eligibility in the second month, the OPA Case Manager requests verifications be provided within the 30-day application processing time frame. If eligible in the second month, the OPA Case Manager must send the household the F124 notice, 'APPR SECOND MONTH---DENY FIRST'.

If a household member or authorized representative is interviewed but does not provide all the necessary information/verification requested in the notice to process the application, the application must be denied on the 30th day following the application *date providing the household had at least 10 days* to provide the requested verification. The OPA Case Manager must send the F200 notice, 'DENY-NONCOMP APP PROCESSING', to the household **on the 30th day** following the application date or the 10th day of the request for information/verification whichever is later. If the household is subsequently determined eligible in the second 30-day period, the benefit amount is prorated from the date the household provides the requested information and/or verification.

If a household member or authorized representative does not appear for the scheduled interview, the OPA Case Manager must send the household the F033 notice, 'RESCHED.-MISSED INT. INTER', no later

than the day after the interview was scheduled. The notice informs the household of its responsibility to reschedule the interview if it wants to continue the application process.

If a household member or authorized representative does not appear for an interview and has made no subsequent contact expressing interest in pursuing the application, the OPA Case Manager must send the household the F200 notice, 'DENY- NONCOMP APP PROCESSING', **on the 30th day** following the application date. If the household is interviewed, submits the required verification, and is determined eligible in the second 30-day period, the benefit amount is prorated from the date of the interview.

HOUSEHOLD- CAUSED PROCESSING DELAYS

If the household has not completed all of the application processing requirements within 30 days following the date of application, the OPA Case Manager must determine if the delay was caused by the household or the agency. The following must have occurred before the OPA Case Manager can determine if the household caused the delay:

1. If the application is incomplete, the OPA Case Manager must have offered or attempted to offer the household assistance with completing the application.
2. If the 'Food Stamp Program Work Registration Understanding and Agreement' form, (HCS-543A), is not signed, the OPA Case Manager must have informed the household of the requirement to have one household member sign the form and given at least 10 days to provide the form.

NOTE: Not all households are required to have a household member sign the form (FS 700).

3. If required verification is not provided, the OPA Case Manager must have:
 - a. Provided the household with a TEAMS notice listing all of the required verification needed to process the application and allowed the household at least 10 days to provide the verification.
 - b. Offered to assist the household in obtaining required verification.
4. If a household member or an authorized representative did not appear for the initial scheduled interview, the OPA Case Manager must have sent the household the F033 notice, 'RESCHED.-

MISSED INT. INTER.', no later than the day after the interview was scheduled informing the household of its responsibility to reschedule the interview within 30 days from the application date.

AGENCY-CAUSED PROCESSING DELAYS

When the OPA has determined the cause for the delay in processing the application was agency-caused, the OPA must take immediate corrective action. The OPA Case Manager must send the household the F300 notice, 'PENDING ADMINISTRATIVE DELAY', by the 30th day following the application date informing the household that its application is pending. The OPA must notify the household of any action it must take to complete the application process. If the household is found eligible during the second 30-day period, benefits are retroactive to the month of application. If the household is found to be ineligible, the OPA Case Manager denies the case and sends the household the appropriate denial notice.

DELAYS BEYOND 60 DAYS

If the processing delay is due to the OPA Case Manager not completing the application process by the end of the second 30-day period, the OPA must continue to process the application until an eligibility determination is reached. If the household is determined eligible and the OPA was responsible for the delay in the initial 30 days, the household receives benefits retroactive to the month of application. If the household was responsible for the delay in the initial 30 days, the household receives benefits retroactive only to the month following the month of application. The original application is used to determine the household's eligibility in the months following the 60-day period.

If the household is at fault for not completing the application process by the end of the second 30-day period, the application is denied. The household is required to file a new application.

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL

The household may voluntarily withdraw its application prior to the the eligibility determination. Voluntary withdrawal means the household contacts the OPA on its own initiative either orally or in writing and requests the OPA stop processing the application. The OPA Case Manager must document in case notes the reason for the withdrawal if it is known. The OPA Case Manager must send the household the X260 notice, 'APPLICATION WITHDRAWN', informing the household of its right to reapply at any time following the withdrawal. **The application form is retained by the OPA.**

REFUSAL TO COOPERATE

Refusal to cooperate means the household is able to cooperate but clearly demonstrates orally or in writing it will not take required steps to complete the application process.

The OPA Case Manager must provide the household with reasonable assistance with completing the application or obtaining verification before

denying the application for refusal to cooperate. If there is any question as to whether the household has merely failed to cooperate as opposed to refused to cooperate, the household must not be denied unless it is clear the household is refusing to cooperate or the time limits have expired for application processing. If a household clearly demonstrates refusal to cooperate orally or in writing, the OPA Case Manager must immediately deny the application and thoroughly document in case notes the household's refusal to cooperate with the application process.

Example: In order to deny eligibility for the refusal to appear for an interview or provide verification, the applicant must clearly refuse orally or in writing and not merely fail to appear for the interview or fail to provide the specific verification needed to determine eligibility.

The household may reapply (FS 104-4) but cannot be determined eligible until it cooperates fully with the application process. A household is not determined ineligible when someone outside the household fails to cooperate with a request for verification. Individuals who are required filing unit members are **not** considered outside the household simply due to not being in the assistance unit such as disqualified individuals coded 'DQ', 'DF', or 'DS'.

► **PROGRAM
COMPLIANCE/NON-
COOPERATION**

If a household's food stamp case is denied or closed for refusal to cooperate with a Program Compliance (PC) review or a Federal Quality Control (FQC) review, the household may reapply for food stamp benefits but shall not be determined eligible until it cooperates with the PC review or FQC review. When unsure of the status of the noncompliance, the OPA Case Manager contacts the Program Compliance Unit to confirm the status of the household's cooperation or non-cooperation with the review of the case.

► If a household reapplies for food stamp benefits during the disqualification period, the household has 30 days following the date of application to cooperate with the PC review. If the household cooperates with the PC review within 30 days following the date of application, benefits are determined from the date of application.

► **State Quality Control (Program Compliance):** When a household's food stamp case is closed for refusal to cooperate with a PC review and the household reapplies for food stamp benefits 95 days after the end of the annual PC review period, the application is processed as a new application because the disqualification ended. The household is no longer required to cooperate with the PC review. The annual PC review period is October 1st through September 30th and 95 days after the end of the period is January 3rd.

Example: On June 8th the household refuses to comply with a PC review for the Food Stamp Program. The case is closed effective June 30th.

On August 1st the household reapplies for food stamp benefits but still refuses to cooperate with the PC review. The application is denied.

On January 4th the household reapplies for food stamp benefits and still refuses to cooperate with the PC review. The household does not have to cooperate with the PC review because the household reapplied 95 days from the end of the annual PC review period. The household must provide all required verifications to meet eligibility requirements for the January 4th application.

► **Federal Quality Control (FQC):** When a household's food stamp case is closed for refusal to cooperate with the FQC review, and the household reapplies for food stamp benefits seven months after the end of the annual QC review period, the application is processed as a new application because the disqualification ended. The household is no longer required to cooperate with the FQC review.

The annual QC review period is October 1st through September 30th and seven months after the end of period is April 1st.

Example: On June 8th the household refuses to comply with FQC review. The case is closed effective June 30th.

On August 1st the household reapplies for food stamp benefits but still refuses to cooperate with the FQC review. The application is denied.

On April 1st the household reapplies for food stamp benefits and still refuses to cooperate with the FQC review. The household does not have to cooperate with the FQC review because the household reapplied seven months from the end of the annual QC review period. The household must provide all required verifications to process the April 1st application.

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